



Connecticut Coalition Against Domestic Violence

#### Member Organizations

**The Umbrella Center for  
Domestic Violence Services**

Ansonia, CT

**The Center for Family Justice**

Bridgeport, CT

**Women's Center**

Danbury, CT

**Domestic Violence Program  
United Services**

Dayville, CT

**Network Against Domestic  
Abuse**

Enfield, CT

**Domestic Abuse Services**

**Greenwich YWCA**

Greenwich, CT

**Interval House**

Hartford, CT

**Chrysalis Domestic Violence  
Services**

Meriden, CT

**New Horizons**

Middletown, CT

**Prudence Crandall Center**

New Britain, CT

**The Umbrella Center for  
Domestic Violence Services**

New Haven, CT

**Safe Futures**

New London, CT

**Domestic Violence Crisis Center**

Norwalk, CT

**Women's Support Services**

Sharon, CT

**Domestic Violence Crisis Center**

Stamford, CT

**Susan B. Anthony Project**

Torrington, CT

**Safe Haven**

Waterbury, CT

**Domestic Violence Program  
United Services**

## Testimony Regarding

### HB 7027, AA Concerning the State Budget for the Biennium Ending June 30, 2019 and Making Appropriations Therefor

#### Office of Policy & Management

#### Appropriations Committee

February 24, 2017

Good afternoon Senator Osten, Senator Formica, Representative Walker, Senator Flexer, Senator Kissel, Representative Genga and members of the committee. CT Coalition Against Domestic Violence (CCADV) is the state's leading voice for victims of domestic violence and those who serve them. Our members provide essential services to nearly 40,000 victims of domestic violence each year. Services provided include 24-hour crisis response, emergency shelter, safety planning, counseling, support groups and court advocacy.

We urge you to protect funding for domestic violence services under the Office of Policy & Management (OPM) budget. **OPM currently provides approximately \$164,375 in state match funds that leverage an additional \$493,125 in federal funding** to support a variety of services that improve outcomes for the victims of domestic violence throughout the state. **Any reductions to the state match funding will result in fewer federal dollars coming into the state to support victims.**

Services supported by OPM state match dollars include:

- **Meeting the needs of underserved victims** – recent efforts to increase service accessibility for all victims of domestic violence have included assessments and updates to ensure ADA compliance, installing video phones to better serve deaf and hard of hearing victims, increasing outreach to Spanish-speaking victims, and assessing effective ways to build connections with Connecticut's Asian-American communities.
- **Child advocates** – domestic violence organizations receive partial funding to support child advocates that worked with nearly **6,000 children statewide** in FY 2016 to build resiliency and address their emotional/social well-being as they seek to overcome the abuse in their home.
- **Law enforcement and victim advocacy** – this funding helps support the state's Lethality Assessment Program (LAP), which is an innovative partnership with law enforcement that allows them to use an evidence-based screen at the scene of an intimate partner violence call to assess whether or not a victim faces potentially fatal violence; over 91% of Connecticut cities and towns currently utilize LAP and connect over 80% of high risk victims to domestic violence organizations annually.
- **Training for law enforcement** – this funding supports cooperative efforts between CCADV and the Connecticut Police Officer Standards and Training Council (POSTC) to provide comprehensive, up-to-date training to law enforcement on best practices for responding to domestic violence, including those found in Connecticut's statewide Model Law Enforcement Policy on Family Violence.

Funding reductions under OPM could result in the elimination of some or all of these services decreasing victim safety and access to services.

(OVER)

### **Current financial realities of domestic violence services:**

In fiscal year 2016, **nearly 40,000 victims of domestic violence** sought help at one of CCADV's 18 member organizations. One in seventeen (**1 in 17**) of those **victims was housed in emergency shelter** because they faced physical danger and had no other safe place to go. Of the 2,325 people in shelter, **1,031 children were housed in emergency shelter with a parent**. Sixty-nine percent (**69%**) of **kids staying in shelter were 6 years old or younger**. Victims and their children receive life-saving services including counseling, support groups, safety planning and court advocacy.

Meeting the emergency housing needs of victims continues to be a challenge. There are 227 domestic violence shelter beds in the state and they are consistently full. **Shelter utilization has increased 119% over the past 8 years**, with the average shelter capacity at 57% in FY 2008 compared to 125% in FY 2016. Shelter capacity has increased largely because the **average length of time that a victim remains in shelter has increased by 77%** over the same time period (26 days in FY 2008 compared to 46 days in FY 2016). In many instances, to meet this growing need, families have to "double-up" in a bedroom or rooms that would otherwise be used communally for entertainment or relaxation end up converted into bedrooms. Neither option is ideal nor beneficial for victims seeking to overcome trauma. When the shelter space itself is stretched to the maximum, victims are housed in local hotels - a costly and unsafe option.

Increased knowledge about services through public awareness efforts and coordinated outreach efforts through programs such as the Lethality Assessment Program (a partnership with law enforcement), result in more requests for services. The length of time that victims remain in shelter has increased because victims are presenting to shelters with a host of complex needs ranging from severe financial abuse and a complete lack of access to monetary resources, to serious medical conditions or behavioral health needs. All of these challenges require additional supports from the domestic violence provider. Fewer recovery options and a lack of affordable housing continue to present obstacles that are growing increasingly difficult to overcome in a timely manner resulting in longer shelter stays and overflow. Until stable, appropriate housing can be identified and secured victims either stay in shelter or return home to their abuser – a potentially dangerous option.

The FY 2016 statewide domestic violence service data also shows sharp increases over the previous fiscal year in other community-based service areas including:

- 5% increase in hotline calls
- 10% increase in community services
- 13% increase in support groups
- 15% increase counseling services
- 19% increase in community education and prevention

Again, we urge you to protect funding that keeps victims of domestic violence and their children safe.

Please do not hesitate to contact me with any questions or concerns.

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